

December

Benefits and Wellness Newsletter

Your Well-Being is Our Priority



Seasonal Affective Disorder

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is more than the winter blues. SAD is a type of depression characterized by its recurrent seasonal pattern, with symptoms lasting about 4 to 5 months per year.

People who have SAD may start to feel “down” when the days get shorter in the fall and winter and begin to feel better in the spring, with longer daylight hours.

The first step is to determine how much your symptoms interfere with your daily life. Do you have mild symptoms of SAD that have lasted two weeks or less?

- Are you feeling “down” but still able to care for yourself or others?
- Do you have trouble sleeping?
- Do you have less energy than usual but still able to do your job or housework?

If so, try doing things that you enjoy doing to help you feel better. You can go outside in the sunlight, spend time with family and friends, and avoid foods with lots of sugar.

Contact your health care provider if you have the following more severe symptoms of SAD that have lasted more than two weeks:

- Feeling depressed most of the day, nearly every day
- Craving foods with lots of sugar
- Experiencing changes in weight
- Having problems with sleep
- Feeling sluggish or agitated
- Having low energy
- Feeling hopeless or worthless
- Having difficulty concentrating

Source: NIH.gov

Self-Care

Self-care means taking the time to do things that help you live well and improve both your physical health and mental health. When it comes to your mental health, self-care can help you manage stress, lower your risk of illness, and increase your energy. Even small acts of self-care in your daily life can have a big impact.

Self-care looks different for everyone. It may take trial and error to discover what works best for you. Although self-care is not a cure for mental illnesses, understanding what causes or triggers your mild symptoms and what coping techniques work for you can help manage your mental health.

- **Get regular exercise.** Just 30 minutes of walking every day can help boost your mood and improve your health. Don't be discouraged if you can't do 30 minutes at one time.
- **Eat healthy, regular meals and stay hydrated.** A balanced diet and plenty of water can improve your energy and focus throughout the day.
- **Make sleep a priority.** Stick to a schedule, and make sure you're getting enough sleep. Blue light from devices and screens can make it harder to fall asleep, so reduce blue light exposure from your phone or computer before bedtime.
- **Try a relaxing activity.** Explore relaxation or wellness programs or apps, which may incorporate meditation, muscle relaxation, or breathing exercises. Schedule regular times for these and other healthy activities you enjoy such as journaling.
- **Set goals and priorities.** Decide what must get done now and what can wait. Learn to say “no” to new tasks if you start to feel like you're taking on too much. Focus on what you have accomplished at the end of the day, not what you have been unable to do.

Source: NIH.gov

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Stress

Stress is generally a response to an external cause, such as taking a big test or arguing with a friend. Anxiety is generally internal and is your reaction to stress. The holiday season can be a joyful time of year for some people. It can also cause stress and anxiety for others.

Here are some tips to help manage stress, anxiety, grief, and worry in a healthy way:

- Make time to unwind. Take deep breaths, stretch, or [meditate](#). Try to do some other activities you enjoy.
- Connect with others. [Talk with people](#) you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling. Connect with your community-based or faith-based organizations.
- Limit [alcohol](#) intake. Choose not to drink, or drink in moderation on days you drink alcohol. Moderation means having 2 drinks or less a day for men or 1 drink or less for women.
- Avoid using illegal drugs or prescription drugs in ways other than prescribed. Don't take someone else's prescription.
- Avoid [smoking](#), vaping, and the use of other tobacco products. People can and do [quit smoking](#) for good.
- Continue with regular health appointments, tests, screenings, and vaccinations.
- Keep a journal.
- Identify and challenge your negative and unhelpful thoughts.
- Practice gratitude.

If you are struggling to cope, or the symptoms of your stress or anxiety won't go away, talk to your doctor right away. You can also contact the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) at 1-800-EAP-4YOU. This is a free counseling service for you and the members of your household. If you are in crisis, call 988 for the national 988 Suicide and Crisis line.

Source [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov)



Sweet Potato Cheesecake

Ingredients

- 1 cup gingersnaps (finely crumbed, or graham crackers)
- 3 tablespoons butter (unsalted, melted)
- 8 ounces cream cheese (light, softened)
- 1 cup sweet potatoes (mashed, peeled, and cooked)
- 1/3 cup sugar
- 1 1/2 teaspoons pumpkin pie spice
- 1 teaspoon orange peel (finely shredded)
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 5 egg whites
- 1 cup milk (evaporated, reduced fat 2%)

Directions

Crust:

1. Combine crumbs and butter. Press mixture into bottom and 1 inch up the sides of an 8-inch spring form pan. Set aside.

Filling:

1. In a large mixing bowl, beat cream cheese, sweet potatoes, egg white, sugar, pumpkin pie spice, orange peel and the vanilla until combined. DO NOT OVER BEAT.
2. Stir in milk. Carefully pour into prepared pan.
3. Bake at 350 degrees for 60-70 minutes until center appears set.
4. Cool on wire rack for 45 minutes. Cover and chill thoroughly.
5. Remove sides of pan.
6. Garnish with dessert topping and orange peel.

Nutrition Serving Size: Serving Size: 1 slice.
Calories: 139; Fat: 6g; Sodium: 137mg; Cholesterol: 19g; Protein: 5g; Fiber: 1g; Potassium: 186mg

Source: www.myplate.gov/recipes/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap/sweetpotatocheesecake